



ADA Facts

INHALANTS

The substances that may be posing the greatest danger to adolescents these days are not sold in back alleys by drug pushers, but at the local hardware store. Inhalants are breathable chemical vapors that produce mind-altering effects. Youth are likely to abuse inhalants because they are readily available and inexpensive. Inhalants fall into several categories:

- solvents, including paint thinner, gasoline, glue;
- gases, including butane and propane, aerosol propellants; and
- sprays, ether, nitrous oxide; and nitrates, including cyclohexyl, nitrite, acetyl nitrite, butyl nitrite.

▼ A Real Danger

The use of inhalants is deadly serious. Reports of deaths of first-time users are common. Only alcohol use kills more youth. Nearly all abused inhalants produce effects similar to anesthetics, which act to slow down the body's functions. Sniffing highly concentrated amounts of chemicals in solvents or aerosol sprays can directly cause heart failure and death. The inhaled chemicals displace oxygen from the lungs and from the central nervous system, suffocating the user or causing lasting brain damage.

Other irreversible effects from inhalants include hearing loss, limb spasms, central nervous system or brain damage, and bone marrow damage. Serious, but potentially reversible effects, include liver and kidney damage, and blood oxygen depletion.

▼ Warning Signs

Using inhalants is called *huffing*. The most common way to use them is to spray or pour the chemicals into a plastic bag and then place the open end of the bag over the mouth and nose. Soft drink cans or socks might also be used.

Signs that someone is using inhalants include a drunken appearance — slurred speech, loss of coordination, and bloodshot eyes. The user has trouble concentrating or paying attention. Many of the symptoms imitate the flu.

The person, the person's breath, or the person's clothing may smell of the chemical. Some of the chemicals act as appetite suppressants, causing weight loss. There may be sores or rashes around the mouth and nose.

Persons suspected of inhalant abuse require immediate medical treatment.

▼ Additional Information

For additional information on inhalant abuse, visit the websites of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIDA (www.drugabuse.org), and the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information, NCADI (www.health.org).



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Source: "Inhalants," Infofax, National Institute on Drug Abuse